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**The Development and Demise of
Alternative Geography in Japan**

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The Development and Demise of Alternative Geography in Japan

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I. PRE-WWII DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE GEOGRAPHY IN JAPAN

Surprising might it be to those who know little about the history of geographic thoughts in Japan, critical geography, with history of less than a generation in the English-speaking countries, has heritage of more than half a century there.

The crises in capitalist society has often provided the impetus for critical approach to geography. It was the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War in North America, and the Great Depression of 1929-30 in Japan. Amidst the wagging militarism and oppression on the academic freedom, Marxism attained its zenith in Japan during 1930s. This was marked by the completion of the first full Japanese translation of *Capital*, and publication of a series called *Nihon Shibonshugi Hattatsushi Kozu* [*A Seminar on Historical*

Development of Japanese Capitalism], which was a comprehensive Marxian analysis of pre-war Japanese society that later became seminal.

Stimulated by the proliferation of Marxism, a couple of works of geography with critical perspective published in the Soviet Union and Germany were translated. The Stalinist influence was obvious in the former, however, in its sweeping disavowal of geographical determinism, which contemporary Soviet regime regarded as a major ideological impediment to the production of the configurations of space and nature that supposedly supported the centralised communist development of the nation. Drawing upon these conceptions, Japanese critical geography started off with the criticism of the geographical determinism.

Kawanishi was the leading figure in this respect. He studied in the UK and Germany where he got acquainted with the Marxist theory of environment then prevalent there. He eventually became the translator of Wittfogel's main work on *dialektische Wechselwirkungstheorie* (1929). The arguments against the conventional environmental determinism from the alternative camp in Japan until the early post-war period essentially drew upon the points put forward by Wittfogel. As in the case of Wittfogel, Kawanishi's conception in human-nature relationship gave attention only to the labour process, neglecting the other inseparable element, that is the production of value and valorisation. His interpretation of Marxism thus lacked the interpretation of capitalist mode of production as a whole.

This drawback was carried on as he shifted his research agenda to the location theory. Kawanishi's alternative treatment of location theory covered two aspects: the interpretation of industrial production as labour process, and examination of different locational dynamism at different stages of the capitalist development. Maintaining the consistency in his flaw, Kawanishi again avoided considering the valorisation process, and placed lopsided emphasis on technological aspects in his formulation of alternative location theory. His historical treatment of locational dynamism was inevitably of empirical and descriptive, since there was no room for theoretical explanations based on locational mechanism embedded in the structure of capitalist economy as a whole.

As Japan got deeper and deeper involved in World War II, this weakness in his interpretation of capitalism developed into degeneration in support of the Japanese militarism. He legitimised the Japanese military predominance in the Asia-Pacific, through propagation of the 'Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Dai Toa Kyozei Ken*)' conception, by drawing upon the notion of geopolitics (Kawanishi 1942). Kawanishi, first to promote the development of critical geography in Japan, was also first in bringing the critical geography into demise.

II. THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF POST-WAR CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN JAPAN AND FOUNDING OF THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHERS (JAEG)

The Allies defeated Japanese militarism, but not this heritage of critical geography. Inheriting the theoretical development in the pre-war period, Japanese critical geographers were quick to pick up researches in the early post-war years.

Kawashima endeavoured to criticise that came from Wittfogel, the mainstay of pre-war critical geography in Japan. Kawashima's critique was mainly aimed at Wittfogel's tenet that the higher the stage of the forces of production the greater is significance attained by natural or physical forces of production. Kawashima claimed that Wittfogel confused nature produced by the humans with the pristine nature. While the produced nature, called by Wittfogel 'social force of production', gains greater importance as the society develops, the pristine nature, called 'physical force of production', loses its leading position in the production process, diminishing its role continuously into only an 'inferior role' (Kawashima, 1952: 88) in production. Due to the above confusion, according to Kawashima, Wittfogel mistakenly concluded that the development of productive force should bring about increasing importance of the nature. This confusion had, Kawashima claimed, led Wittfogel to a position similar to environmental determinism.

In contrast to the steady development of critical geography as exemplified in this Kawashima's work, the Association of Japanese Geographers (AJG), national school of Japan, poised meanly to market itself to the state apparatus. The president of the AJG addressed in its annual general assembly that 'the warfare has always enriched the geographical knowledge', yet the Japan's defeat in WWII awakened Japanese geographers from the dream of colonial geography and brought them back into the national land planning projects (Tsujimura, 1948). The *Geographical Review of Japan* (*Chirigaku Hyoron*, *GRJ* hereafter), the official journal of AJG, boasted, 'geography has gradually been recognised as a practical science among many walks in life, as manifested in its making inroad to the government sector' (*GRJ*, 21-4,5,6, 1948).

It was this academic and social ambience of the national school and post-war emancipation of democracy and socialist movements that gave momentum to the critically-minded Japanese human geographers to consolidate themselves into a camp of 'geography as a social science'.

Every major country has a 'national school' of geography, which is essentially a part of state apparatus, as manifested in the AJG case above. This is manifested in its political function to 'academically' legitimatise imperialism, wars of aggression and the state development projects (Smith *et. al.* eds., 1994). For this reason, while the 'national school' is supposed to support academic practises of individual researchers, it often functions adversely to the promotion of academic freedom by oppressing new paradigms and alternative orientation. Faced with this constraint, the alternatives in the academics are sometimes motivated to create its own 'counter-institution'. It represents the position of alternative scientists in support of the grassroots, in pursuit for the scientific truth instead of fawning upon the authority and in dedication to the social change instead of accepting the domination of the existing regime of capital accumulation and imperative. The 'counter institution' is thus the antithesis of the national school. The 'Statement of Purpose' of the ICGG well demonstrates how the position of the alternative is like.

In this respect, Japanese geographers could be proud of themselves in having organised the first 'counter institution' of geography ever existed on the globe. The pre-war development of critical geography in Japan, albeit some of the serious conceptual flaws, gave Japanese critical geographers enough academic stocks for a 'counter institution' much earlier than the advent of ICGG.

They organised 'Geography Study Group' and the 'Association for the Geological Collaboration', both as divisions of the Association of Democratic Scientists, both of which were placed under strong influence of the Japan Communist Party. These critical geographers 'turned their back on the existing authority and order, and ... struggled to reform the AJG by means of the election campaign of its councillors; while they simultaneously placed the founding of the JAEG on the agenda (Kazamaki, 1998).

Ryujiro Isida, a contemporary of Kawanishi, had been playing vital roles in consolidating the camp of the criticals. In spite of his pre-WWII paper, Isida (1935) had already claimed that geography were to have 'nomothetic nature as one of the social sciences'. In his demand for more robust scientific law in geography, however, Isida did not go beyond aspatial general theories of society.

At the autumnal AJG meeting of 1951, the critical geographers hosted a roundtable titled 'human geography as a social science'. Isida (1952), the chair of the session, claimed, in conducting the research of geography, 'theories of general social science have to be assumed, and enumerating the facts from field surveys or descriptive regional geography does not in itself belong to the category of "research" in social sciences'.

This torrent of critical geography came to the confluence: the establishment of

the Economic Geography Forum, then the Economic Geography Study Group, and ultimately the Japan Association of Economic Geographers (JAEG, *Keizai Chiri Gakkai*). It was founded in 1954.

Hiroshi Sato, the professor of economic geography at Hitotsubashi University and later assumed the first presidency of the JAEG, proclaimed its objective as follows:

We hereby establish the Japan Association of Economic Geographers, and hope to create, develop and propagate economic geography as a social science, by means of elaborating the theories of economic geography as well as of conducting research on actual issues of economic geography, with scope expanded and research outcomes incorporated without regard of the pigeon-hole of the discipline and with research collaboration organised by the member, through free and lively criticisms (JAEG, 'General Index').

The themes of first four meetings were, in chronological order, 'on economic geography', 'on region (economic region, agricultural region and industrial region)', 'the fundamental problems of economic geography' and 'agriculture and industry or the urban - rural interregional relationships'. The strong conceptual and theoretical inclination of the JAEG at its initial several years was clear.

The inaugural issue of the journal of JAEG, *The Annals of the Association of Economic Geographers* (*Keizai Chirigaku Nempo*, *AAEG* hereafter), published in 1954 contained five articles and one book review. The articles included 'Materialism and Geography', 'The Methodological Development of the Analysis of Industrial Area: as a Process to Recognise the Problematic from the Critical Economic Geography', 'Allocation of Agricultural Productive Force in the Soviet Union', 'Measuring Transport Orientation of Industrial Location based on Virtual Weight Calculation Method' and 'Location of Electro-chemical Industry'. The review was about a book on stock farming published in the People's Republic of China. The titles of the articles and review suggest the earnest theoretical, rather than empiricist, orientation of critical geographers then, and favour of socialist countries as areas to be studied.

The second issue, published in 1955, followed this suit. It contained a paper presented in the second annual meeting on Marxian concept of economic region. Kawashima, the author who had once criticised Wittfogel, claimed that the attempt to define economic geography as a science dealing solely with human-nature relationship unduly limited its scope of research. He introduced an alternative agenda for economic geography: the study of regional variation or localities. He stated as follows (Kawashima, 1955: 9):

Spatial distribution of economic phenomena and the localities created concomitantly are the outcome of contingent processes, and their development and demise are also contingent.

They are thoroughly of nomothetic in nature. Thus, the principal agenda of our discipline must be, at least in its theoretical domain, to discover this law.

Kawashima criticised the past tenets explaining local variations in economic geography, including environmentalism and the neo-classical economics. He explicitly turned down the latter in favour of historical materialism, by claiming (Kawashima, 1955: 11-12):

An attempt to explain the production of regional economic structures drawing upon the law of equalisation of marginal productivity is as much empty and nonsense as the claim that 'it is nothing but competition based on liberalist principle that produces regional economic structures'. In explaining the production of regional economic structures, it is self-evident which of the following the economic geography should investigate: either the sort of abstract principle as it were of management technique or more realistic law of social economics.

Kawashima then discussed the relations between the urban and the rural regions, and pointed out the 'expropriation of value through rent from the rural to urban regions', drawing upon the statistical data of the United States. In conclusion, he proclaimed (Kawashima 1955: 17):

Overcoming localities and transcendence of classes are the two major targets that the humans must and can achieve. The most fundamental task of our economic geography is indeed to clarify the relation between these two intertwined targets.'

His paper had great impact on the research practise of Japanese critical geographers, and effectively changed their research agenda from the human-nature relationship to the study of economic regions.

Another paper in the same issue of the *AAEG* (Okuda, 1955: 31) was more philosophically oriented. It attempted 'ontological discourse of the dialectical world as the object of science in general', and postulated the following propositions, which included a tenet that was quite similar to, but proposed independent of, Schaefer's critique (1954) to exceptionalist Hartshorne:

1. Geography and history do not constitute independent disciplines in themselves but divide themselves into physical and social sciences. Epistemologically, both history and geography require the unity of idiographic descriptions and nomothetic understanding of generalities. The classification of sciences according to methodology does not make sense.
2. It is wrong to assume a region as something neither of physical nor social; or to apply the methodology of physical science to a social or physical region.
3. The object is unity of quality and quantity. Quantitative geography errs in that it wrongly assumes that the areas and eras could be understood only by reducing them to mere quantity.
4. The development of real world is inseparable unity of area and era. The development,

areas and eras are all the realist categories, corresponding to the motion of substances that is the unity of space and time.

5. The development of the world manifests itself in the development of corresponding areas and eras. Stages of development of areas and eras in turn correspond to various different stages of development of the world.
6. From the above, it is concluded that the geographical world of area and the historical world of era are unified dialectically into development of the dialectical world. Partial views of the world of geography and history must be progressively integrated into a dialectically unified view of the world.

Later, Okuda synthesised these propositions into a book conceptualising his own critical geography (1969).

III. THE PROGRESS OF CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN JAPAN IN THE 1950S AND 60S

Having founded the JAEG, and the new agenda set, the geographers in the critical camp started to act vigorously to propagate critical geography both in its own journal and in the AJG, which was the 'enemy camp' subject to reform.

The 1956 issue of the *AAEG* published two articles (Akamine, 1956; and Sato, 1956) pertinent to the history of thoughts of the critically-oriented geography in Japan. This was one of the first attempts to put the research agenda of the critical camp onto firmer background of past trajectory of the discipline.

Case studies with historical materialist perspective were another feature of the earlier issues of *AAEG*. Ohara (1957), originally a researcher of American economy and later having assumed the second presidency of the JAEG, published an article on the development and demise of an old cotton town, Lowell, Massachusetts. Ohara gave detailed account of the role that the waterfalls on the Merrimack River in the development of cotton spinning industry there, and eventual demise of it, as the consequence of the shift of main power sources from waterfall to steam engine. Ohara thus applied the environmental conception to explain this locational shift, not any theories of space.

Abhorrence in conceptualisation of space *per se* within critical geography was quite popular among critical geographers at that time. In his pre-war book, which was revised and published again in 1950, Ohara (1936) had emphasised the descriptive nature of

geography, while declining to treat location theory as the mainstay of the discipline. Iizuka, another contemporary of critical geography, also made the same point. Iizuka claimed, 'the function of geography lies by definition in the descriptive or regional aspect' (Iizuka, 1952: 117). Having studied in France in pre-war period, and supported Japanese militarist expansion during WWII, Iizuka gave considerable influence to critical geographers in its early post-war development. His authority lay in French geography, Paul Vidal de la Blache in particular, whose principal work *Principes de Géographie Humaine* he himself translated into Japanese.

At the other front of the camp of critical geographers, attacks against the national school were waged. Kamozaawa (1954), a disciple of Iizuka, praised in its journal *GRJ* the practise of Soviet geographers under Stalinism. He proclaimed, 'upon the gradual transition from socialism to communism, Soviet academic circle, in drawing upon the epoch-making paper of Stalin, achieved to publish the papers that pressed economic geography forward'; and encouraged Japanese geographers to 'study the article of Stalin thoroughly'. Another review by Watanabe praised the 'rapid development' of production and 'diversification' of productive forces in Estonia through the inroad of Russian-managed industrial plant (Watanabe, 1955). No mention was given to the fact that the inroad of the plants was a consequence of the forced annexation of Estonia to the Soviet Union, under the secret treaty between the two dictators: Stalin and Hitler.

This indicated the political background of critical geographers in Japan then. Their practise was much infested by the dogmatic Stalinist Marxism, and the political principle that backed it, rather than the conceptions of ethnicity, minority or question of democracy in socialist countries, topics common among western critical geography a generation later. In the Leninist-Stalinist party principle, only one party can legitimately claim itself to be the 'vanguard', structured along the principle of 'democratic centralism'. Here, the 'great leader' ultimately commands the affairs of all the social movements, and retains his (no 'hers' so far) office until his death, as in the cases of Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il-Sung and Ceauşescu. Armed with 'scientific socialism', supposedly one and the only truth, the 'vanguard party' leads the non-party masses, supposedly ignorant and unenlightened, towards the struggle for socialist revolution under the hegemony of the 'vanguard party'. To secure this hegemony, the party fraction is formed behind the wall. The critical geography was naturally no exception to this 'dual structure', as suggested in their propagation of the thoughts of the 'great leader': Stalin.

Another line of attack against the AJG was to criticise the conventional tenets of geography. In *GRJ*, Kamozaawa (1955) singled out the paper on 'the population centre of gravity' for condemnation, as having abstracted social relations away and ignored the

unemployment embedded in 'the population', thereby 'leaving out the historical and social nature' of population. Yet, an inherent paradox that inhabits critical geography seems to have been ignored by Kamoza: it is easy to criticise the tenets of conventional geography, but is extremely difficult to create the theories of its own (Mizuoka, 1996). Even worse, at a corner of the critical camp, there was even a vector to encourage empirical description positively instead of theorisation on space. The critical geographers in Japan were thus gradually canalised into exceptionalism with theories and conceptions borrowed other disciplines employed for research.

A typical case was studies of disaster and natural resources. The critical geographers then engaged in the field researches on dam construction and disaster. As disaster research has by nature strong association with physical environment, and as the capitalist development of power sources and destruction of forest had often affected adversely to the livelihood of the peasants and urban poor, it was an apt topic for critical geographers in pursuit of social relevance. In this context Akamine (1960) and Ishii (1960) appreciated the traditional flood prevention technology of Japan and criticised the modern river improvement technology that attempted to block high water. Incidentally, this was common conception among contemporary critical civil engineers who drew upon the Maoist thought.

The studies on developing countries were another case in point. As many existing paradigms and preceding researches done by non-geographers are readily available in this area, little ingenuity in creating a grand theory unique to critical geography was required to gain entry. The application of existing framework, the dependency theory *inter alia*, could produce research outcomes with some flavour of geography, which puts blame on the dominating imperialist power and backs the oppressed and the poor. The *AAEG* published articles by Kamoza (1957) on Turkey and Central America, Koga (1957) on India and Oiwakawa (1964) on Palestine. The studies of backward regions in a country also appeared in the *AAEG*, by Takeuchi (1961) on Southern Italy, for example.

Other approaches made by Japanese critical geographers at that time included the study of industrial geography with emphasis on the management and labour relations, and study of historical geography drawing upon the concepts of historical materialism and modes of production.

This indicates that, in spite of the efforts shown in the earlier issues of the *AAEG*, Japanese critical geographers did not succeed in creating their own theory or robust research framework of critical geography. The gap between the abstract conceptions of critical geography and the idiosyncratic research based on aspatial Marxist conception largely remained unfilled. Passive consumption of theories and conceptions developed

by other disciplines for application to case studies of particular localities were prevalent, and often positively encouraged.

This characteristics of Japanese critical geographers in the 1950s was summed up in a seminal book, *A Lecture Notebook of Economic Geography* (Kamozawa, 1960). In this book, of which plan Kamozawa had already presented in the *AAEG* (1955) five years before, he explicitly endorsed the 'passive consumption' of other fields of social science in the research practise of critical geographers. He claimed (Kamozawa, 1960: 15-16) that critical economic geographers were to 'borrow' theories from other social sciences, then to apply them to the idiosyncratic field studies, in order to analyse the specific ways in which the general laws of economics are manifested. Needless to say, the passive consumption of aspatial social and economic theories and their application to descriptive regional geography are the hallmark of exceptionalism. By early 1960s, however, the researches among critical geographers in Japan were more canalised to the practise summarised by Kamozawa.

There emerged nevertheless attempts among some geographers in the critical camp to break away from this legacy among Japanese critical geographers towards the second half of the 1960s. They strove for more positive conceptualisation and theorisation of critical geography. In fact, this was the brief period having lasted for less than a decade when Japanese critical geography enjoyed the zenith on the globe.

A series of articles written by those in the critical camp appeared in the 1966 volume of *GRJ*. These articles demonstrated their creativity in establishing conceptions between the social relation and space, or spaces of different scales, now common topics among the critical geographers in the English speaking countries decades later. Ota (1966) suggested a general relationship between the national and the local, through analysis of a locality in Shizuoka Prefecture being subsumed into the national industrial space. Okuyama (1966) studied the effect of pre-capitalist legacy on the capitalist mode of production by analysing the microscopic reification of feudal lord domination in the common land, as manifested in the macroscopic process of transformation in the relations of production from serfdom to capitalist management. In the presidential address of the *AJG* (1966), Isida demonstrated the variation in the social relations created variegated understanding of space and concomitant variation in geographical knowledge (chorography). Atsuhiko Takeuchi (1966) analysed the stagnation of Northern Kyushu industrial area and attributed its cause to the lack of subcontractors that failed to create an industrial complex. Moritaki (1966) studied the class and spatial conflict that arose when the capitalist relation of production subsumed a natural substance, river. Two years later, Fujita (1971) demonstrated that independent farmers had played positive role in

delineating boundary between public and private forests and protected more forests from expropriation by state.

Nevertheless, some other articles that appeared in *GRJ* still remained exceptionalist even though the authors intended to make them critical. These articles typically reported results of detailed exceptionalist field studies, with aspatial 'radical' words as 'monopoly capital', 'union-management co-operation under the social-democratic line' thrown into them with little theoretical substance.

Wane of the critical position in the JAEG camp came to be felt among more Marxism-conscious geographers. Moritaki (1966: 15) expressed his concern for this situation as follows:

State monopolistic-capitalist systems have multiplied and intensified social conflicts (both between classes and between regions) as they relate to the natural environment and the development of natural resources. Ignoring this critical situation, some 'Marxist' economic geographers assume that economic geography must be a branch of 'theoretical' social science, omitting all phases immediately concerned with the natural environment from the study content. They try to reduce the field of economic geography even by arbitrary 'co-operation' with various schools based on capitalistic economies. Such tendencies deserve criticism as involving an unscientific distortion of the nature of economic geography.

This criticism targeted, firstly, to some geographers in the JAEG camp who had been trying to make compromise between Marxism and the neo-classical location theories; and secondly to the position like Kawashima who attempted to throw away human-nature relationship from the agenda of critical geography in favour of the 'concept of region'.

The concern of Moritaki was nevertheless positively resolved six years later by Ueno (1972) who later became the head of the Southwest division of the JAEG. Ueno's book *The Ultimate Origin of Chorography*, attempted to integrate Marxist and humanistic approaches into one theoretical frame, in explaining the notorious Minamata region, polluted heavily with organic mercury by Chisso Corporation, from geographical perspective. This was the book demonstrating the culmination of post-war Japanese critical geography. Ueno's point was to interpret the concept 'socially-made environment' analogously to the fetishism of commodities in Volume I of *Capital*. In drawing upon the interpretations of Heideggerian phenomenology by two Japanese philosophers, Watsuji and Hiromatsu, Ueno attempted to apply Hiromatsu's (1969) tenet to understand something objective as intersubjective in interpreting nature from Marxist perspective. Ueno (1972: 127) claimed that 'Marx himself interpreted environment as *in-der-Gesellschaft-sein* or reification of social relations'. Based on this tenet, Ueno proceeded to construct

his own logic of the 'socially-produced environment' as follows:

The environment itself is of dual nature: the use-value, having utility for humans' daily life within which production and living are conducted; and simultaneously the value, in the sense that environment is the fruit of production or reification of socially necessary labour. It is the value aspect of environment that reifies the relations of production, resulting in the most degraded environment relegated to the minimum of human existence.... This reality of contradiction forms the core of [Marxian] environmental theory, within which the contradictions of society come to manifest themselves (Ueno, 1972: 129).

Ueno further stated that the above general process took on various manifestations depending on the historical legacy, racial or ethnic characteristics, or physical conditions, whose variations were to be explained in part with Marxian rent theory. This diversity developed into 'heterogeneous groups with own identities'. The heterogeneous 'localised human groups' assumed 'intersubjective behavioural patterns' of their own (Ueno, 1972: 154). The task of the 'Marxian chorography' as defined by Ueno was to study the relationship between these 'localised human groups' and the 'socially-produced environment'; and how the 'localised' in turn further formed unique localities as manifested in regionalized groups. Ueno then applied these tenets to notorious Minamata case. The Shiranui Bay of Minamata, once intimate environment of the local fishers, tightly integrated into them even as a part of their bodies, had suddenly transformed itself into hostile space with waste containing organic mercury emitted from Chisso Company. Faced with this situation, the local fishing people regarded Shiranui Bay intersubjectively as alienating and proceeded to protest the polluter.

Recall that the above quotes and conceptions were taken neither from the recent issue of *Society and Space* nor from a paper presented in the last ICGG meeting. They are from a book written by a geographer in 1972 -- a year before the publication of Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973), totally independent of the discourses of the critical geographers in the West. This clearly indicates the high intellectual standard that Japanese critical geography achieved by early 1970s.

While in the English-speaking countries had just started off its trajectory of developing critical geography with publication of the inaugural issue of *Antipode* in 1969, the counterpart in Japan at that time had demonstrated the creative position that paralleled critical geography of the west a decade later. Aoki (1961), who served the fourth presidency of JAEF, had once claimed that Japanese critical geography 'has attained the highest standard among Marxist geographies in the world'. Considering these attainment, Japanese critical geographers at that time indeed deserved this laurel.

IV. THE DIVIDE: THE YEAR 1973 AND AFTER

Year 1973 marked the turning point of critical geography, both in English-speaking countries and Japan, in ways quite contrary to one another. The Japanese counterpart of *Social Justice and the City* was Yada's paper titled 'On Economic Geography'.

In this paper, later incorporated into seminal *The Regional Structure of Post-war Japanese Capitalism* (Moritaki and Nohara eds., 1975) as the theoretical introduction, Yada criticised past tenets of critical geographers in Japan, including Kamozaawa, Kawashima and Ueno, as affiliating to 'economic chorography school', which, according to Yada's (1973) claim, concentrated on to the research of an idiosyncratic localities. Yada presented his own alternative, which he called 'regional structure theory (*chiiki kozo ron*)'. Yada's criticism of 'economic chorography' sounding similar to Schaefer's criticism of Hartshorne, the alternatives proposed were quite contrary to one another. Schaefer and the geographers who have followed his suit sought spatial theories based on the profound understanding of social and economic theories; whereas Yada merely sought to expand geographical scale of empirical research, from a locality to a nation. In pursuing this objective, Yada attempted to identify relatively autonomous economic regions within the national scale as a whole, partly drawing upon a model similar to neo-classical shift-share analysis, a tenet which comes to better terms with the conventional than with the alternative.

Yada had originally been a critical geographer specialising in coal-mining studies. In his paper published in *AAEG*, Yada (1967:19) denounced the government policy attempting to rationalise coal-mining regions after inroad of petroleum by the multinationals into Japan, claiming that it was 'to the support to the large enterprises and the omission of small companies'. Honest to his position condemning the 'large enterprises', Yada was much politically engaged. He contributed articles using an alias to a journal with strong influence of the Communist Party of Japan, condemning 'the rapid economic growth of Japan under her dependence upon the United States', 'the monopoly capital exploiting and abusing domestic resources on the pretext of "regional development" and "urbanisation"', 'failure of the resource policy of the LDP [=conservative] government' and so forth.

Yada put a considerable number of geographers, the critical and the conventional alike, together, into a research group called '*Chiiki Kozo Kenkyukai*' with Kitamura, a conventional industrial geographer, as the figurehead. The consequence of incorporating more conventional geographers for creating a bigger, thus more powerful

academic faction meant the *Chiiki Kozo* group to become more compromising to the conventional tenets and more estranged from the critical. The *Chiiki Kozo* group was thus attempted to create a faction dominated by Yada and his followers within the critical geographers' camp rather than to facilitate the academic paradigm change in geography towards a more robust body of critical theories and conceptions.

A considerable number of economic and social geographers of younger generation, who would have otherwise attracted to the emerging critical geography in the English-speaking countries, became active in the *Chiiki Kozo* group. The halo of political authority that Yada must have contributed to the rapid expansion of *Chiiki Kozo* group among younger critical geographers. They regarded *a priori* the practise of '*chiiki kozo* theory' as that of critical, without giving robust scrutiny to the content of the 'theory'. The author (Mizuoka, 1998) experienced the existence of an organisational structure behind the wall that bears resemblance to the Leninist-Stalinist party. In this 'dual structure', the core members of *Chiiki Kozo* would manoeuvre hard to bring the whole practise of critical geographers into the thoughts of Yada, using the *Chiiki Kozo* group as the 'transmission belt'. Just as the revolutionariness of the precious words flowing out of the mouth of the 'great leader', Yada's conception of *chiiki kozo* and his practise spread as taken for granted among the critical. At the time when critical geography in North America emerged from the stage of empiricism, and moved towards attempt 'to construct a new, philosophical base for human geography' (Peet 1977: 20), the Japanese counterpart in fact plunged into empiricism and compromise with the conventional.

Even worse, Yada gradually converted his political position away from the socialism into the conservative. He began to associate with the conservative LDP-dominated government, by actively serving the number of government committees that promote state regional development and urbanisation policies. The differences between the conventional and the *chiiki kozo* have become increasingly unclear, in terms not only of their paradigms, but also of theories and practises.

The younger, once critical geographers have nonetheless stayed loyal to him, because of nepotism and collusion involved. University positions were offered to the followers of Yada's *chiiki kozo* conception, and eventually they came to dominate the executive board of the JAEG itself.

V. THE CRISIS OF CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN JAPAN

After two decades since the advent of Yada's school, several quaint situations have come to surface in the circle of economic geographers closely associated with the JAEG.

The sole occasion when the JAEG dealt with the paradigms of critical geography outside Japan in its annual meeting was that in 1993. The meeting was supported unofficially by a research commission of AJG, 'Theories and Tasks of Social Geography', organised by geographers with stronger interest in critical geography and the Society-and-space debate. The meeting was quite successful and intellectually stimulating, with keynote speech by David Ley of UBC and heated debate among the participant, which included a considerable number of social scientists in other fields.

It had been customary of the *JAEG* to publish the full papers of all the presentations made in the annual meeting for many years. However, for this meeting, the editorial board of the journal rejected one paper presented in the meeting, claiming that 'the style of the paper did not fit into that of an academic journal'. My paper was accepted (Mizuoka, 1994), but an array of comments returned from the editor, who was one of the loyal members of the 'regional structure' school. One of the comments demanded that it should give positive coverage that *chiiki kozo* had contributed to the government regional development policies. The adherent of the *chiiki kozo* thoroughly admitted the hallmark of the school of offering support to the government policies.

In spring 1996, a group of Japanese geographers closely associated with the JAEG and *chiiki kozo* planned to hold 'the Congress of Anglo-Japan Geographers' in Tokyo. However, few UK participants, who had been expected to pay for their own travel, volunteered to come and it ended up in failure. The excuse of many potential UK participants was the high travel costs; but many UK geographers did travel over a similar distance with opposite direction, on their own expense, to Vancouver to attend the IICCG in 1997. This was an indication that Japanese geographers in the mainstream of the JAEG could no longer come to terms with the critical perspectives now prevailing in global geography.

In autumn 1997, a Japanese translation of the 3rd edition of *Location in Space*, originally written by Lloyd and Dicken in 1990, came out (Ito *et. al.*, 1997). The book drew heavily upon the critical conceptions of space developed by the English-speaking critical geographers lately, to form a unique attempt to subsume spatial theories into the conceptions of industrial geography. Regrettably, the translators, many of whom maintained more or less association with the *chiiki kozo* group, mistranslated the most fundamental terms and phrases in the book, including 'mode of production', the basic term of historical materialism and 'heterogeneous space', an essential assumption in Weberian industrial location theory. It seemed that most of the translators had not

understood the much of logic of social and spatial conceptions nor social theories contained in Lloyd and Dicken's original.

About the same time, *GRJ*, which had been the target of criticism and radical reform by the critical geographers in the JAEG camp almost half a century ago, published an article on multiculturalism and multiethnic symbiosis (Naito, 1997). Naito, once on the Executive Board of the JAEG, had quitted the JAEG altogether a couple of years before. In this article, Naito questioned Yamamoto, the successor of Yada in his former position at Hosei University and the incumbent chair of the executive board of the JAEG, in his practise as a social scientist taking his paper on the Turks in Germany as a case. The AJG and JAEG camps have thus switched their positions around to the opposite diametrically.

Recently, the annual and local divisional meetings of the JAEG haave increasingly come to gear themselves to the neo-liberalist corporate culture of the local states, striving to market themselves to the national and global economy under deregulation policies. Three times over less than a year, the JAEG hosts meetings dealing with the national and local development policies, with Yada playing significant role in all of them. In the annual meeting of 1998, held under the general theme 'Deregulation and Regional Economy' for example, Yada (1998) uncritically presented the synopsis of the most recent national land development project 'from the position of those who participated in formulating and deciding on the projects'. He delivered the following statement in the discussion session (Yada *et.al.* 1998: 102-103):

We should no longer use the conception of the balanced growth to legitimise mere redistribution of public investment and income I believe that the philosophy behind regarding infrastructure provision as fundamental or offering equal opportunity in geographical terms amounts to provide the environment that facilitates access to modern service and enjoyment of nature with a trip that does not incur substantial time and cost, regardless of the places of birth and living. There is no need to provide every single local state with uniform services. Transportation and network having been well provided with, those who value proximity to a city and enjoyment of urban service more might opt for living in the city; and those who prefer the proximity to nature and want to indulge in nature with occasional trips to the city might opt for living in the 'multi-natural living zone'. Once these are well provided with, the residents are then left for their own choice. This new land development policy involves the shift to the concept where promotion of the region is on the shoulder of the residents.

The neo-liberalist tone is obvious in this statement of Yada. Amidst the torrent of critical geography and neo-liberalism flowing in conflict to one another over the globe,

and the theories and conceptions of spatial configuration growing into a global intellectual currency of geographers, the JAEG, once the first camp of critical geographers on the globe, had been transfiguring itself into 'self-imposed isolation' from the global community of critical geography, and confining themselves into a smaller pigeonhole of the nation state to support its neo-liberalist apparatus.

VI. THE UNDEMOCRATIC TURN OF THE 'NEO-LIBERAL' JAEG

There has been a persistent attempt to institutionalise this neo-liberal turn of the JAEG. It gained stronger momentum after the election of the executive offices of JAEG in 1996. In this election, where Yada lost for the presidency, Yamamoto assumed office of the head of the JAEG Executive Board.

Yamamoto proposed the 'Constitutional reform' of the JAEG in the Executive Board meeting held on 3 October, 1998. In the current Constitution, the members of the Executive Board, the decision-making body of the JAEG, are elected directly by unrestricted ballot of the members at large, and later the President appoints more members. Keiichi Takeuchi, a social geographer and once served the head of the commission on geographic thoughts of IGU, has assumed the office of President in 1994, and won in the election of 1996 again.

The main proposition of the 'reform' is to abolish the system of free and direct election of the members of the decision-making body of the JAEG. What is implicit behind this proposition is more explicit in the proposal made by Matsubara, one of the loyal disciples of Yada, in the Executive Board meeting held on 12 December, 1998. According to Matsubara's proposition, the incumbent executive board members, majority of whom are to be appointed rather than elected in Matsubara's 'reform' plan, prepare the list of nominees for the office of the standing executive committee, a newly proposed decision-making body. The number of the nominees on the list is set exactly as many as the number of seats. This list is then presented to the members at large, who could do nothing but rubber-stamping it, or write-in the other names of members not on the list, albeit the latter having virtually no prospect to win. In this system that conjures up that of fascist or Stalinist, the incumbents, currently influencing strongly by the *chiiki kozo*, will self-perpetuate its power of domination over the JAEG, both academically and politically.

President Takeuchi (1999) explained the 'rationale' for this sort of 'reform' as

follows:

Now the problem is that with more than ten years of having the same executives, there are very few members of the succeeding generation to take their place; moreover, those few are extremely busy with university administration affairs.

From its foundation in 1954, the executives have been elected directly by the votes of all the members (actually, about one-sixth of the total members vote). I personally believe that we have to try to maintain this system in one way or other, but many younger colleagues in charge of executive affairs think that with this system the association can no longer perform administrative duties efficiently, and they are proposing to elect the executive body in some other way, say at a kind of council meeting. As president, I don't want to, indeed must not, impose my opinion regarding the future structure of the organization.... I think that the current debate within the Association pertains to a search for feasibility and efficiency in the administration of the Association. For the organization with its membership of more than 700, under certain circumstances, indirect election of the executive body may be inevitable and I don't jump to the conclusion that it is undemocratic just because of this.

The key words for Takeuchi in support of this reform are 'efficiency' and 'feasibility', which are also the favourite key words of the neo-liberalists. It might be indeed of great interest for the payers of annual membership fee that the JAEG is managed more cost-effectively. But this was not the point that Takeuchi makes. Any sober social scientists, inclusive of critical geographers, must then stop here and ask: 'efficiency for whom?' Showing no awareness of the neo-liberal shift of JAEG, Takeuchi explicitly supported 'indirect election', claiming it to be 'inevitable'. He also gave his implicit consent to the proposition to elect the executive body 'in some other way, say at a kind of council meeting', into which variety of manipulations could intrude in selecting the executive body members. Another rationale that Takeuchi gave, that is 'with more than ten years of having the same executives, there are very few members of the succeeding generation to take their place' was glib, as he had taken the action contrary to it. In 1996, President Takeuchi made dubious authorisation of the appointment of two geographers, both of them were Tories to Yada and had served the executive board for more than a decade by then, and had originally been elected as the councillor of the JAEG in the 1996, with terms of office for three years, to the Executive Board. Takeuchi thus gave the two undue power of double representations, as it were, both in upper and in lower houses of the Congress! This is a situation quite unusual from the viewpoint of a sober subscriber of democracy principle, and one could easily smell some sign of corruption in it. These hard facts manifested themselves what the undemocratic turn of the JAEG was all about. This level of 'democracy' awareness could naturally

brings about the conclusion, 'I don't jump to the conclusion that it is undemocratic just because of this'.

On 6 February, 1999, the Executive Board of the JAEG rammed the bill through that would change the procedure of electing members of its decision-making body from direct to indirect. Only 17 out of 54 members turned up the meeting of this day, and there were merely 12 ayes. In the meeting, two propositions were tabled: one (which was adopted by ramming) by those essentially subscribing to the neo-liberalist line, and the other by more the critically oriented, attempting to gear the JAEG to the global alternative line. Both of the propositions were tabled afresh, based on those proposed previously. Debate lasted only for two hours. Yamamoto, the chairperson of the Executive Board, first asked the members to restrict the free debates by limiting the discussion 'that only queries the unclear details', leaving the real free debate for less than an hour. In spite of the debate still remaining premature, and major points of the propositions still remained to be debated, Yamamoto suddenly proposed to take vote amidst the strong objections raised from the floor. He was flurried, as manifested in his miscounting of the votes a couple of times, which were carried out by show of hands instead of balloting that had been demanded from the floor. President Takeuchi remained silent for most of the time, commenting only at the last instance that he would leave everything to the Executive Board, thereby committing implicitly in support of the neo-liberalist and undemocratic turn of the association at this decisive moment.

The proposition 'adopted' in the Executive Board meeting of that day included the following points:

1. the procedure through which members of offices shall be determined not by the Constitution, but by a bylaw, which is not subject to the debate and decision of the general assembly in which the members at large participate;
2. there shall be 40-member 'councillors' meeting' and 10-member 'standing executive board'; and the members of the 'standing executive board' shall be elected from among the members of councillors by 'election that includes consultation among the members of the councillors' (a statement that is contradictory in itself).

No doubt the above clauses will lead JAEG away from the democracy in making decisions, and 'feasibility' in which the neo-liberals self-perpetuate their power in the JAEG would be enhanced. Once in power, they could steer more 'efficiently' the direction of the JAEG under the new constitution, as the opponents could have been eliminated through 'consultation' or 'council meeting'. The undemocratic turn of the JAEG through 'Constitutional reform' would thus be complete: it institutionalises the neo-liberal turn of the JAEG in perpetuity.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A cocktail of a quaint recipe, with conventional geography, Leninist-Stalinist party principle and fawning upon the capitalist state apparatus mixed together, is awaiting to be served in the guise of 'critical geography' to some 770 members of the JAEG. At the very moment when the Korean Association for Spatial Environment Research (KASER) has consolidated a firm camp of critical geography on the other side of Korea Strait, the heritage of the JAEG to guarantee 'the forum free to bring forward questions and discussions regardless of social status or generation' (Kazamaki, 1998) is shoved to the verge of demise.

It is obviously the responsibility and in the interest of the internationally allied critical geographers in Asia and the Globe to make the effort together to save the JAEG from the verge of demise, to bring democracy and freedom of research with critical orientation back into it. The move has already started: the first meeting of East Asian Regional Conference in Alternative Geography (EARCAG) held in Kyongju, Korea from 24-26 January, 1999, as a regional division of ICGG, adopted the following motion:

The First Meeting of the EARCAG Expresses Support for our Colleagues in the Japan Association of Economic Geographers in their Struggle to bring back the Association as Critical as it was founded, and to Democratise its Process of Decision Making.

In Japan, a new organisation of critical geography is emerging to replace the role that the JAEG had once played. This is a working commission of AJG, 'Society and Space', which now works in close association with ICGG and EARCAG to propagate critical geography with global perspective among Japanese geographers and other social scientists.

Another important task for the alternative geographers would be to propagate the alternative view of the world and localities and the issues related to them based on the conceptions created by the critical geographers to the university and school students and the general public. The UK critical geographers affiliated to Open University have been much successful in this respect, producing attractive teaching programmes and materials which have been widely welcomed by the international audiences. The similar project is also under discussion in the Asia and Pacific context. The University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), established in 1991 by Australian initiative and now co-ordinated by the international secretariat located in Tokyo, is currently considering to produce an

Internet-based, interactive virtual student exchange programme. The general conception for the project was approved in the Steering Committee of the UMAP International Secretariat held in Tokyo in January, 1999, and is now pending some forms of funding. Geography is explicitly included in the possible list of subjects, and themes considered for the programme include such salient issues as ethnicity, development, environment, urban poor manifested in the concrete situations in the Asia and Pacific. Contribution of geographers in the Asia-Pacific to this project would be much expected. Upon completion, the UMAP teaching programme will facilitate better mutual understanding and co-operation of the people at the grass-root level across the international boundaries, which have so far been more porous to capital while more impeding to the people at large.

Amidst the concurrent of the conflicting vectors towards the neo-liberal and the critical in geography, we, the contemporary critical geographers, have great responsibility for action at various frontiers. Whether we assume this responsibility for actions honestly and seriously or not will surely determine the fate of the degree of democracy, liberty and equality in our discipline and on the globe. The future historians of geographic thoughts will no doubt put us under their close scrutiny according to this criteria.

FURTHER READING ON HISTORY OF CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY IN JAPAN:

Mizuoka, Fujio. 'The Disciplinary Dialectics That Has Played Eternal Pendulum Swings: Spatial Theories and Disconstructionism in the History of Alternative Social and Economic Geography in Japan' *Geographical Review of Japan* (Ser. B) 69(1), 1996.

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